UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.6/1992/NGO/14
28 February 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Thirty-sixth session
Vienna, 11-20 March 1992
Item 5 (a) of the provisional agenda*

PRIORITY THEMES

EQUALITY: ELIMINATION OF DE JURE AND DE FACTO DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Statement submitted by the World Veterans Federation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (category I)

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 29 and 30 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.

* * *

The World Veterans Federation (WVF) was founded in 1950 by a group of war veterans and war victims to help build a peaceful, just and free world founded on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The WVF is an active non-governmental organization presenting statements and testimonies on numerous issues including those related to peace, disarmament and human rights. It has also presented statements to the Commission on the Status of Women.

One important objective of the WVF is to defend the interests of war veterans and war victims by all legal and constitutional means. Recognizing that the rights of women war veterans and women war victims require targeted attention, the WVF created a Standing Committee on Women.

The purposes of the WVF Standing Committee on Women are to identify needs and recommend appropriate methods of action to meet them regarding the problems that women have to face due to their participation or their involvement in armed conflicts and the consequences affecting women on account of armed conflicts (including legal, economic and social status). It is these concerns that the WVF wishes to bring to the attention of the Commission as it considers the theme of equality.

---

*E/CN.6/1992/1.

V.92-51470 8177T

Today, unhappily, despite some positive changes in world order that we have seen in the last two years, the numbers of victims of war continue to proliferate as new and old wars, internal conflicts and civil strife plague our planet. It has been estimated that over two thirds of these war victims are women and children. As the Commission reviews the situation of women around the world under the theme of equality, we urge that the large groups of women war victims and war veterans should be included.

Equality of treatment of women war veterans and war victims by national Governments and international agencies is a major interest of the WVF Standing Committee on Women. Through several surveys and anecdotal testimony, we have found that women war victims often experience de jure and de facto discrimination. This is the case for millions of large numbers of refugee women and many war-disabled civilian women. In previous statements, we have set forth our concerns about this situation.

We also call the attention of the Commission to the sizeable groups of women war victims who have suffered discrimination from Governments in the benefits, health care and pensions available to them. Women - spouses and mothers - who have been the carers for the war disabled have not been recognized for their important services and have been denied pensions and health care. Because of this devoted service, the carer is unable to pursue work of her own and often is ineligible for social security. When the disabled veteran dies, the carer is left without any means for survival. Except in a couple of countries, war widows get inadequate pensions and often no health benefits. Furthermore, many women veterans and war victims lack information on the benefits they are eligible for and how to obtain them.

At its Fifth International Conference on Legislation concerning Veterans and War Victims, at Bad Ischl, Austria, in 1988, the WVF gave major consideration to the legal status of women war veterans and war victims. A number of recommendations were made by the Conference including a call to Governments to take action that would:

(a) Ensure full equality of treatment for women war victims and women war veterans;

(b) Include ageing women in scientific research on the late effects and associated diseases related to experiencing war;

(c) Provide information on available benefits and programmes as well as counselling services to all war victims and war veterans, including women;

(d) Enact measures to provide adequate compensation to improve the living standards of widows, including suitable housing, and better health benefits;

(e) Call for government recognition of the nursing contributions of the spouses of severely disabled veterans and make provision for income, health benefits and security during their old age.

We hope that these findings of the WVF will be helpful in broadening the scope of the work of the Commission.